
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

★ news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Most or Flanagan - Int. 5634

For Release OCTOBER 21, 1962

FEATURE MATERIAL

NO SHOOTING OF CERTAIN DUCKS NOW--MEANS MORE LATER

If those worry-free hunters who like to blast away at ducks, any kind of ducks, think "species management" is a new form of harassment, they are mistaken. For according to the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, species management is not new nor is it harassment. It may be a challenge to the responsible hunter, but not a burden to him. But to the irresponsible nimrod, it is a distinct turn in the road.

But what is species management anyway and when did it start? Species management is a positive approach to better hunting. Take the waterfowl situation this year. Practically all duck populations are down from the late 1950's and some are dangerously low. The population of scaup ducks, however, has maintained itself at a reasonably high level. When the Fish and Wildlife Service announced this season's hunting regulations, complete protection was provided for some species of ducks that are in very short supply but a "bonus" of two scaup in the bag limit was added.

A "no hunting" tag on a given species one year may mean that a season on that species can come that much sooner. Without knowing it, the first caveman probably practiced some form of species management. By following the practical course of hunting in areas where game was relatively abundant, he allowed wildlife populations in other areas to grow until they also proved too great an attraction for his throwing stick.

When the Federal Government was given the responsibility of protecting and managing migratory birds in 1918, through enactment of the Migratory Bird Treaty

Act, the first set of Federal hunting regulations prohibited the shooting of wood ducks and eiders. As early as 1932, there were limitations on the total of canvasback, redhead, scaup, ringneck, teal, shoveller and gadwall ducks that could be included in the daily bag. Obviously, species management is not new to the American hunting scene.

Neither is species management something that the Federal Wildlife people have dreamed up just to harass the American sportsman. At least as far as waterfowl are concerned, it is probably one of the most effective tools for providing additional hunting opportunity. This is evidenced by the fact that not one of the 48 species of migratory waterfowl known to occur naturally in the United States has been lost since the Migratory Bird Treaty Act became effective, despite droughts, freeze-ups, and other vagaries of nature. Lets see how it works.

Back in the late 1930's, drought in the prairie pothole breeding grounds reduced the population of canvasback and redhead ducks to a point where additional protection was needed. In 1936 and 1937, hunting of these birds and some other species was prohibited. Under this complete protection, canvasback and redhead populations bounced back to a point where such special restrictions were no longer needed. This was a case of successful application of species management.

If species management is to meet the pyramiding problems of the future as it has helped meet the problems of the past, the hunter must be able to identify the birds before he starts blasting away at them. This is not imposing a hardship on him. It is simply one of the obligations he accepts when he decides to go duck hunting. It is one of his contributions to his grandchildren. Or, putting it another way, it is his alternative to no duck hunting at all.

Suppose that the population of a certain kind of duck drops to a precariously low level, while populations of other ducks stay up. There are two ways that such an endangered species of duck could be saved. Either restrict the season on the single species--this would be species management--or restrict the season on all ducks.

Most duck hunters would rather learn how to identify ducks than to face a closed season. Learning to identify ducks can bring the hunter a lot of pleasure and requiring positive identification before pulling the trigger allows the birds to come in close. This reduces crippling losses. Hunters who are not sure of their ability to identify "bonus" birds should not try for these "bonus" birds.

While restricting the harvesting of a species is the thing which directly affects the hunter, it is not the only kind of species management. Management of habitat or living conditions for a particular kind of animal seems to hold even greater possibilities for better hunting. For example, Canada geese have been redistributed to a number of areas where they had once been abundant. These birds are pretty choosy when it comes to selecting a place to stop over for a rest or to spend the winter. National Wildlife Refuges, by providing suitable Canada goose accommodations, have put goose hunting within reach of sportsmen who otherwise might never have had a chance for one of these birds.

Other forms of species management are habitat improvements designed to help one particular species or another, or several species that have similar living requirements.

Most outdoor enthusiasts probably have seen the wooden or metal duck nesting boxes attached to posts or trees near watered areas. These are intended for wood ducks. In a natural environment, wood ducks nest in cavities in trees. Since man arrived on the scene, most of these natural nest sites have been cut down. One of the more popular conservation activities for Boy Scouts, sportsmen's groups, and conservation agencies has been to construct and place artificial nest boxes for wood ducks.

For years, wood ducks were fully protected throughout the country. This year, two wood ducks may be included in the daily bag in each of the four Flyways. Nest boxes probably have not been completely responsible for the improved status of wood ducks in the United States but the combination of protective regulations and nest boxes has certainly helped.

Drawdown of water levels is a method of managing a watered area for several kinds of ducks that have similar feeding habits. This is an instance when that which many consider "species management" blends in with what others have long considered merely a phase of "waterfowl management." Most North American ducks can be classed as either diving ducks or puddle ducks. Diving ducks usually feed in deep water, diving as much as 30 feet or more for their food. The puddle or dabbling ducks feed in shallow water and merely "tip up" to glean their food from the bottom. Drawdowns allow marsh plants to grow down to the edge of the low water. Reflooding the area then makes these plants readily available as duck food. According to how fast the water level is raised and the depth of the lake when full, an area such as this can attract divers, dabblers, or both.

Not only a species but geography enters into species management. This is the idea behind the flyway concept in which the North American continent is divided into four flyways with each one being managed under separate regulations. This idea has been applied to much smaller areas with considerable success in various parts of the country.

This year's regulations allow hunters in portions of western Idaho, southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon to take two additional mallard ducks in the daily bag. This is permitted because of the buildup of a large wintering population of mallards in this area. Since this Columbia Basin area is not heavily populated, gunning pressure on these birds has been comparatively light.

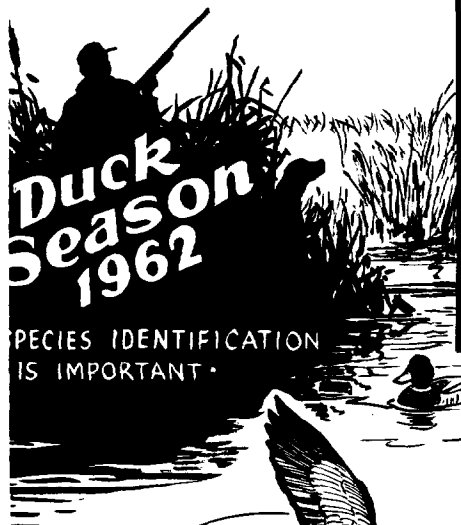
Northeastern Idaho has another situation where species management is necessary. Rare trumpeter swans winter here. Since there is some resemblance between trumpeters and snow geese, no shooting of snow geese is allowed in four counties in this part of the State.

Since practically all wildlife management these days is some form of species management, effective application depends to a great extent on research.

Research to find out what waterfowl eat, how they nest, how their populations change from year to year and where they go during migration are all necessary for the wise application of species management.

Some aspects of species management are as old as history, while others are as young as todays news. Just like magnum shotshells and outboard motors, species management is here to stay.

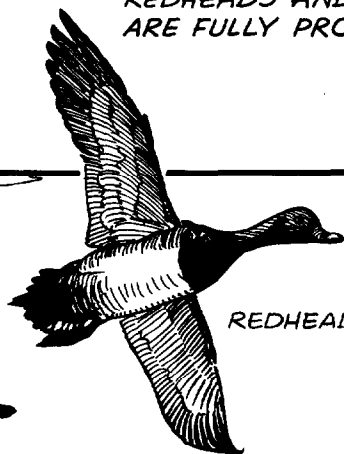
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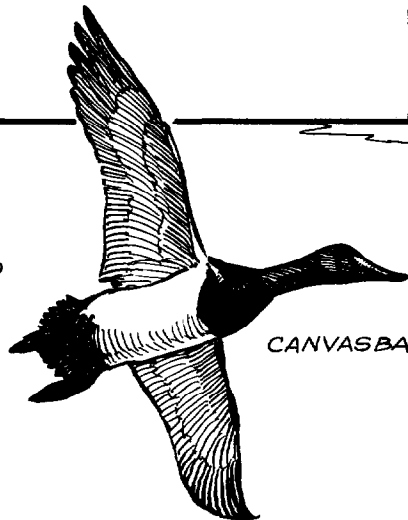
SPECIES IDENTIFICATION
IS IMPORTANT.

PROTECTED

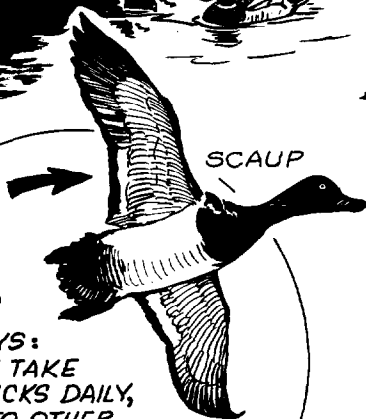
REDHEADS AND CANVASBACKS
ARE FULLY PROTECTED.



REDHEAD



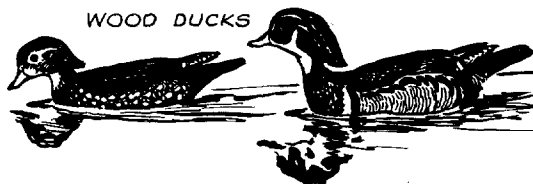
CANVASBACK



SCAUP

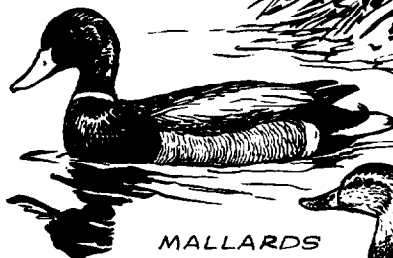
THE ATLANTIC,
MISSISSIPPI AND
CENTRAL FLYWAYS:
HUNTERS MAY TAKE
TWO SCAUP DUCKS DAILY,
IN ADDITION TO OTHER
DAILY BAG LIMITS.

THE DARK EDGE OF THE SPECULUM
HELPS TO IDENTIFY SCAUP
FROM OTHER SIMILAR DUCKS.

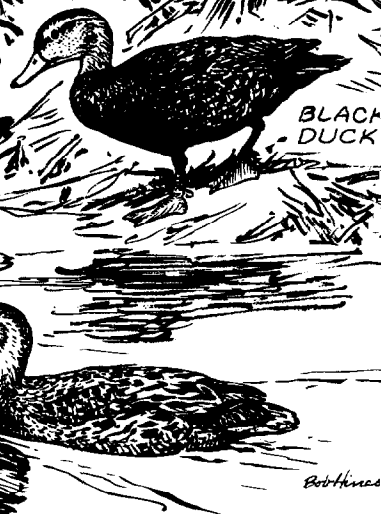


WOOD DUCKS

- THE DAILY LIMIT OF WOOD DUCKS IS TWO.
- IN THE ATLANTIC FLYWAY:
IT IS LEGAL TO TAKE TWO MALLARDS,
OR TWO BLACK DUCKS; OR ONE
MALLARD AND ONE BLACK DUCK
PER DAY.
- IN THE MISSISSIPPI FLYWAY:
ONLY ONE MALLARD, OR ONE BLACK DUCK
MAY BE TAKEN PER DAY.
- IN THE CENTRAL FLYWAY:
ONLY ONE MALLARD MAY BE TAKEN PER DAY.



MALLARDS



BLACK
DUCK

